

REMARKS

By this Amendment, claims 1, 5 and 10 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter contained therein. Claims 2-4, 6-9, 11-14 are amended. Claims 15-16 are newly added. Accordingly, after entry of this Amendment, claims 2-4, 6-9 and 11-16 will remain pending.

In the Office Action, claims 1, 5 and 10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over US 6,157,325 to Makansi et al. The Applicants respectfully disagree and, therefore, respectfully traverses same. In addition, the Office Action states, “Claims 2-4, 6-9, and 11-14 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.”

Claims 2-4, 6-8, or 11-13 have been rewritten in independent form including all of limitations of base claims 1, 5, or 10, respectively. Claims 9 has been amended to depend from claim 6, and claim 14 has been amended to depend from claim 11. Claims 15 and 16 are newly added. Claim 15 depends from claim 8 and claim 16 depends from claim 13.

Since claims 2, 6, and 11 have been rewritten to include the limitations formerly presented by claims 1, 5 and 10, the Applicants respectfully submit that claims 2, 6 and 11 are now in condition for allowance. The remaining claims depend from claims 2, 6 and 11 and are, therefore, also believed to be in condition for allowance.

The Applicants respectfully submit that, by incorporating the limitations from claims 1, 5 and 10 into claims 2, 6 and 11, respectively, the Applicants have not altered the scope of claims 2, 6 and 11 when viewed from the perspective of prosecution history estoppel. Specifically, the Applicants respectfully submit that, because the limitations from claims 1, 5, and 10 existed as a part of claims 2, 6 and 11 from the date of their filing, the amendments presented herein cannot be considered limiting. Accordingly, the claims continue to enjoy a broad scope, both literally and under the doctrine of equivalents.

Next, the Applicants point out that minor grammatical changes have been made throughout the claims to improve their readability. The Applicants respectfully submit that these changes are purely formalistic in nature and, therefore, should not be construed to narrow the claims. Moreover, the presentation of these changes should not support an

argument that the scope of the claims is more narrow, either literally or under the doctrine of equivalents.

Accordingly, the Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the asserted rejections. In addition, the Applicants respectfully submit that claims 2-4, 6-9 and 11-16 are in condition for allowance. The Applicants, therefore, respectfully submit that this application is now in a condition for allowance.

In view of the foregoing, the Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider the rejections of the claims, withdraw the rejections, and pass this application quickly to issue.

If there are any fees due for entry of this submission that are not otherwise accounted for, the Applicant asks that any such fees be charged to our Deposit Account No. 03-3975, with reference to Order No. 008312/0304796.

Respectfully submitted,

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